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ABSTRACT

A longitudinal study sought to determine whether American newspapers shifted from foreign to domestic news content at the end of the War of 1812, as journalism historians traditionally believe, or if the shift in fact occurred before then as a result of a heightened American self-consciousness. A sample was drawn from newspapers from 1808 through 1812. Each selected edition was content analyzed according to content categories: domestic, foreign, other, and advertising. Content was measured in inches (physical volume of material) and then converted to word counts. The results indicated that the newspapers printed nearly twice as much domestic content in 1812 than they had in 1808, and the mean levels of foreign content decreased over time from 1808 to 1812, occurring mostly between 1809 and 1810. There was a significant increase over time in mean levels of federal government news. These results indicate that American newspapers became more domestic in content in the years just prior to the War of 1812, rather than during that conflict, as historians suggest. This shift was not due simply to a reduction of news from abroad, but may have resulted from attempts by the editors to print content that was more American in nature, or that was newsworthy. It cannot be determined from this study whether the newspapers led public opinion or followed it. (HTH)

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THE AMERICAN NEWSPAPER IN THE EARLY NINETEENTH CENTURY: THE TORCH-BEARER?

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THE AMERICAN NEWSPAPER IN THE EARLY NINETEENTH CENTURY: THE TORCH-BEARER?

Introduction

While older Americans in the period just prior to the war of 1812 still retained something of their colonial outlook, two generations had been born since the Revolution. The new generations were American. Their interests were toward America and away from the Old World.[1] Although changes had begun in the early 1700s, the early nineteenth century was a time of great strides in the development of the American character, that sense of identity at once so difficult for Americans to define, yet so easily identifiable by those outside the nation.[2] In asserting that there was already an American way of living apparent by the early 1800s, one historian states:

> During these years there emerged the beginnings of an American style, a distinctly American social pattern, expressed in a thousand and one major and minor variations from the British and European.[3]

What had been essentially a British-colonial style became after the Revolution an American style. This trend was accelerated and accented by the Revolution and the uniquely American experience of the Confederation and early Constitutional periods. The minor differences between Americans and Europeans in dress, speech, and manners were over-shadowed by deeper differences in intellectual life. These were differences of a more fundamental nature concerning attitudes and points of view which separated America from the Old World.[4]

There grew in America a kind of "us against them" mentality; ways of acting and thinking were characterized as either American or non-American. Americans were constantly aware of the necessity of placing the nation in the correct relationship to the outside and using as a standard Britain and Europe. This sense of separateness is described in the following:

> It was continually necessary therefore, during these formative years, to ask of any American social attitude, institution, or experience, "Is it better than what was before in colonial times, or than what is now in England and Europe?"[5]

There was in the United States a sense of this deliberate choice: accept the values of the Old World and be non-American or begin anew and be American.

One of the most visible means of demonstrating the essential differences between the Old World and the new was through the newspaper. While the assertion of Spiller et al. that America boasted the largest proportion of newspaper readers in the world is arguable,[6] it can be said that Americans were turning more and more to the newspaper as a source of information, education, inspiration, and agitation.[7] In fact, it has been argued that the newspaper "was America's literature -- she had no time for more."[8] Indeed, it was through the instrument of the newspaper that the major impetus for a native American literature arose:

> Almost every newspaper or short-lived magazine had its poets' corner, and had also its essayists dressed in motley, patched with shreds of Addison, Swift, Goldsmith, or Johnson.[9]

Yet, the period just before the War of 1812 was not the time for American literature to come full-grown into the world.[10] There was the new nation to build and much of the talent that

might have been devoted to literature was directed at the immediate problems of survival, as is pointed out in the following:

> Party warfare tended to make the American a "newspaper reading animal," to borrow the phrase of an English traveler, and to make American writers propagandists and pamphleteers. Seemingly a grave disservice was thereby done to the cause of literature; but, by developing a great mass of readers, the newspaper made possible a wide and expanding market for books.[11]

The changes that were occurring in American society were revealed in the newspapers. Indeed, one historian has suggested that the newspaper was the vehicle that led to the growth of American self-consciousness.[12] Research by the writer shows that American newspapers were growing more domestic in their news interests in the period prior to the War of 1812.[13] Such a finding is not surprising if one accepts the premise that in this period a major step was taken toward establishing the American character.[14]

Before the War of 1812 American newspapers were primarily concerned with foreign news. In referring to the newspapers that survived the Revolution, Bleyer asserts that news "from abroad took precedence over the very limited number of local items.[15] Following the same line, Mott agrees:

> News from overseas had been more important than home news in the country's papers; it had indeed bulked larger than any other categories, except in later years when advertising and politics crowded it.[16]

Traditionally, journalism historians believed that such concern with England and Europe ended with the War of 1812 and that it was that conflict which "brought home to editors and readers the importance of domestic news."[17] Historians, when they address the question at all, see the war as the seminal event in the shift of American newspapers from foreign to domestic news concerns.[18]

The implication of this "history in a vacuum school" is that American editors somehow discovered domestic news during the War of 1812. Research[19] contradicts this view, but more important, mainstream history suggests the fallacy in the belief. It ignores compelling evidence from historians outside journalism that the history of newspapers is not a special case but is part of the overall process of American history.[20] A shift from foreign to domestic news content would reflect fundamental changes in the way Americans viewed their place in the world. It would suggest that Americans were becoming more American and less European. And by changing the news emphasis of their newspapers, editors would be reflecting (or possibly directing) the changing image of themselves that Americans held.

The purpose of this research is to address the question of when the shift occurred. For if editors reduced the levels of foreign content during the War of 1812 when their source of foreign news had been interrupted, they would merely have been victims of circumstance. If, however, the shift occurred prior to the war, when presumably foreign news was still available, then this would offer evidence that Americans were becoming more American in the early years of the nineteenth century.

Methodology

Because research by Avery[21] offered evidence that the shift from foreign to domestic news concerns by American printers was on-going and not abrupt as argued by traditional historians, it was decided that a longitudinal study of the newspapers themselves was required for the present study. Reason indicated that the question could not be studied, as it apparently has been in

the past, by looking at isolated newspapers during the War of 1812. Accordingly, this study looked at American newspapers over a five-year period, from 1808 through 1812. Since there is no evidence that any significant shift in newspaper content occurred in the years just prior to 1808 and because Jefferson's embargo of 1807[22] offered the earliest opportunity for such a shift to occur, 1808 was judged as the best entry point for this study. Because it is the contention of this research that the shift happened prior to the War of 1812, it was felt that no purpose could be served by extending the study beyond 1812.

The concern of this research is with the content of all newspapers in the country during the period under study. Since studying every newspaper over the five-year period represents both a mammoth task and ultimately an unnecessary one, a sample was drawn. Selecting a random sample of the newspapers available in 1810 required drawing a sample from a total population of 371 newspapers (see Appendix A for the newspapers in sample).[23] The number four was randomly selected as the entry point and then, utilizing the sampling fraction (.10),[24] a sample of 37 newspapers was selected by drawing every tenth newspaper from the list of newspapers.[25]

The frequency[26] of each newspaper was determined and a random sample for each newspaper selected utilizing a table of random numbers.[27] Each selected edition was content analyzed according to the following general content categories: Domestic, Foreign, Other, and Advertising.[28]

All newspaper content was measured in inches and then converted to word-counts. The results thus achieved were assigned

to a single content category,[29] utilizing Avery's[30] classification schema (see Appendix B for reliabilities). The data were subjected to two statistical tests, analysis of variance,[31] and the Scheffe procedure.[32]

The Hypotheses

Research reported elsewhere[33] found compelling evidence that newspapers in New England, Middle Atlantic States, and the upper South[34] shifted their attention from foreign to domestic news content in the years just prior to the War of 1812. While no empirical evidence exists showing that newspapers in the remainder of the South and frontier were different from those in other regions, non-scientific sampling[35] suggests that there may have been differences in content. While there may have been differences between regions, it is believed that, in the aggregate, newspapers throughout the country will show a shift from foreign news concerns to domestic ones. This is in keeping with the findings reported elsewhere.[36] Because the underlying assumption of this research is that American newspapers were becoming more interested in things American, it follows that such interest would be reflected in the amount of news space given to American news.

H_1: There will be a statistically significant increase in mean levels of domestic content over time.

Because earlier findings[37] revealed that domestic and foreign content changed in an inverse ratio, it is expected that the present study will show the same trend.

H_{II}: There will be a statistically significant decrease in mean levels of foreign content over time.

If overall foreign news content decreased, then one category that would be expected to decrease drastically would be foreign relations news.

H_{III}: Mean levels of foreign relations news will decrease significantly in all newspapers over time.

One of the major concerns on the frontier, according to historians,[38] was hostilities between settlers and Indians. Toward the end of the period studied stories of Indian attrocities and threatened hostilities became a staple of American newspapers in the East.[39]

H_{IV}: The mean levels of content devoted to Indian matters will increase significantly over time in all newspapers.

News of federal government activities was readily available to newspapers in the more settled regions of the country, primarily through reprints of accounts from the Washington (D.C.) National Intelligencer.

H_{V}: There will be significant increases in mean levels of federal government news appearing in all newspapers over time.

Earlier research[40] indicates that much news found in frontier newspapers was local in nature. One area where local news might be expected to manifest itself is in the attention paid to local government news. Communications might be limited between regions but no such serious limitation would apply to local matters. However, research reported elsewhere[41] indicates that there was no significant change in the amount of local government news reported by newspapers in New England, Middle Atlantic States, and the South.

H_{VI}: There will be no significant changes in mean levels of local government news in all newspapers over time.

Findings

In Hypothesis I, it was proposed that domestic content would increase significantly from 1808 to 1812. Table 1 compares the mean words per edition for each year with the means for all other years using the Scheffe procedure. The table shows no statistically significant difference between the means for years

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Table 1 About Here

1808 ($\bar{X}$ = 4757) and 1809 ($\bar{X}$ = 4831). However, a statistically significant difference was found between the means for those two years and the means for 1810 ($\bar{X}$ = 6373), 1811 ($\bar{X}$ = 7037), and 1812 ($\bar{X}$ = 8596). Comparing the means for 1808 and 1812 reveals that the newspapers printed nearly twice as much domestic content (90.4% more) in 1812 than they had in 1808. Hypothesis I is retained.

Hypothesis II stated that there would be a statistically significant decrease in mean levels of foreign content over time. Table 2 compares the mean words per edition for each year with

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Table 2 About Here

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the means for all other years utilizing the Scheffe procedure. The means for 1810 ($\bar{X}$ = 2970), 1811 ($\bar{X}$ = 1996), and 1812 ($\bar{X}$ = 1341) are significantly different from each other and from 1808 and 1809. The means for 1808 ($\bar{X}$ = 4842) and 1809 ($\bar{X}$ = 5299) are not significantly different. Except for 1808 and 1809, the means decrease over time. The newspapers were printing nearly four times as much foreign content at the beginning of the period as they were printing at the end. The major decrease in foreign content

occurred between 1809 and 1810, a 44 percent reduction. Due to the decrease between the means for 1808 and 1812, Hypothesis II is retained.

Hypothesis III predicted that there would be a significant decrease in mean levels of foreign relations news over time. Table 3 compares the mean words per edition for each year with the means for all other years using the Scheffe procedure. The mean for 1808 ($\bar{X}$ = 4604) is significantly larger than the

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Table 3 About Here

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mean for 1812 ($\bar{X}$ = 2191). In fact, the means decreased significantly each year between 1808 and 1812, except for the mean for 1809 ($\bar{X}$ = 5024), which is larger than the mean for 1808 but not significantly so (1808: $\bar{X}$ = 4604; 1809: $\bar{X}$ = 5024; 1810: $\bar{X}$ = 3568; 1811: $\bar{X}$ = 3075; 1812: $\bar{X}$ = 2191). Because there is a significant decrease in means between 1808 and 1812, Hypothesis III is retained.

Hypothesis IV stated that there would be a significant increase over time in mean levels of news devoted to Indian matters. Table 4 compares mean words per edition for each year

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Table 4 About Here

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with the means for all other years utilizing the Scheffe procedure. The means increase for each year from 1808 to 1812 but the mean differences between years are not always significant. The mean for 1808 ($\bar{X}$ = 127) is significantly smaller than the means for 1811 ($\bar{X}$ = 507) and 1812 ($\bar{X}$ = 917) but the differences between 1808 and 1809 ($\bar{X}$ = 173) and 1810 ($\bar{X}$ = 324)

are non-significant. However, the mean for 1812 is significantly greater than the means for the other years. Hypothesis IV is retained.

Hypothesis V predicted a significant increase over time in mean levels of federal government news. Table 5 compares the mean words per edition for each year with the means for all other years using the Scheffe procedure. The mean for 1812 ($\bar{X}$ = 2218) is significantly greater than the mean for 1808 ($\bar{X}$ = 1487). While the mean for 1812 is the largest for any year, the mean for 1808 is not the smallest. The mean for 1809 ($\bar{X}$ = 872) is

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Table 5 About Here

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the smallest and is significantly different from the mean for 1808. The mean for 1809 is significantly smaller than the mean for any other year (1810: $\bar{X}$ = 1401; 1811: $\bar{X}$ = 1305; 1812: $\bar{X}$ = 2218). The results are quite mixed, but because it was hypothesized that the mean for 1812 would be significantly larger than the mean for 1808, Hypothesis V is retained.

Hypothesis VI predicted that there would be no significant changes over time in mean levels of local government news. The analysis of variance results were non-significant ($F = 1.775$; $df = 4, 1384$; $p < 0.1313$), revealing that there were no statistically significant differences among the mean words per edition for the years studied. Hypothesis VI is retained.

Discussion

American newspapers became more domestic in content in the years just prior to the War of 1812. Far from occurring during the war as historians suggest,[42] the major shift in news focus--a

13 percent decrease in foreign news--began as early as 1810. While never quite constituting a third of the newshole (30.2 percent in 1809), the percentage of published foreign news declined to 6.8 percent by 1812 (Table 6). Domestic content increased dramatically from a level of about 70 percent in 1809 to 93.2 percent in 1812.

Table 6 About Here

Was advertising a factor? Had advertising increased appreciably, newspapers might have reduced foreign content to provide space for more advertising. However, advertising varied little over the period. Because overall content volume was fairly constant, the papers apparently increased domestic content and reduced foreign content at virtually a one-for-one rate. Why? While the evidence is far from conclusive, one may argue that the Jefferson Embargo of 1807 reduced the availability of news from abroad. Reduced shipping between the United States and England and Europe would limit the amount of foreign news received through newspaper exchanges, personal correspondence, etc. However, had the embargo been truly effective, one would expect the major shift away from foreign news to occur as early as 1808 or 1809 and not between 1809 and 1810. Further, imports exceeded exports in 1808, 1809, and 1810, although it is not clear what proportion of goods were being carried on American or foreign ships.[43] (The embargo applied only to American shipping; foreign shipping was unaffected by the embargo itself, although it is unclear what effect any possible hostility toward foreign shippers might have had.) While there was in

theory a diminished opportunity for foreign news to reach the United States, such news likely got through, at least that which accompanied the importing of goods.

A crucial factor in the shift appears to have been a declining tendency among American editors to publish foreign relations news, though, of course, this content category was arbitrarily defined and its fluctuations a function of any larger trends in foreign coverage. Foreign relations news, which had constituted over a fourth of the newshole in 1809, accounted for just over a tenth by 1812. However, it was foreign relations news from foreign sources that most dramatically decreased, again suggesting the embargo's effectiveness. In 1808, almost all foreign relations news came from foreign sources, and the percentage of foreign relations news from domestic sources increased from only 6.2 percent in 1808 to over 50 percent by 1812. The newspapers clearly did not stop providing foreign relations news altogether, although the overall

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Table 7 About Here

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reduction--regardless of sources--does suggest some decline in coverage. While the reduction could still have been a function of embargo-induced diminished availability as discussed above, it may alternatively have been due simply to an increasing interest among publishers in providing domestic content.

For example, Indian news increased substantially over the period. Reports of confrontations between Indians and whites increased, regardless of whether the number of confrontations actually increased, or the importance of and interest in those confrontations increased instead. Of course, greater publication

of Indian news might be interpreted as pandering to an audience interest in violence (many newspapers reports concerned alleged Indian massacres; at times these were quite graphic) but that, it is hoped, would hardly be the only reason for printing the stories, correspondence, and official documents. After all, violence was nothing new to American newspaper readers. Violence in the cities, if not widespread, was certainly a fact of life.

Perhaps a better argument could be made that Indian news was news, and coincidentally, domestic news. There was little difference among the regions in the percentage of newshole given to Indian news. It was news, interesting news, and domestic news. For editors, no more justification would be needed.

There were sizable increases in federal government news printed over the period. Deteriorating relations with England and France (due to impressment, ship seizures, blockades, etc.) generated more reports from Congress and the Executive than would have occurred during a more tranquil period. There was simply more to report from the capital. Whether demonstrating greater concern for an American story or increased availability, federal government news was a uniquely American content and the editors printed it in growing amounts.

At first glance, the finding that the levels of local government news did not change significantly appears to contradict the basic premise that American newspapers were becoming more domestic in their news concerns. Would not a press publishing more domestic news increase the levels of local government news almost as a matter of course? Perhaps, but much of the

material printed by newspapers during the period consisted of reprints from other newspapers due to staff limitations and absence of rapid communication networks. Such material was often related to the national scene, federal government, military, etc. Over six times as much news was borrowed as was locally produced.[44] This is not surprising if one considers that the newspapers were generally small operations. The editorial staff of the average newspaper consisted of the editor and no one else, so there was little time and few bodies to produce much in the way of local material (there would be little reason for newspapers to reprint local government news from other areas, unless the news related directly to local concerns).

To summarize, there is evidence in this research that editors in the United States were reducing their dependence on foreign news in favor of greater domestic content. That it did not grow out of disenchantment with a particular category of content is clear from the findings that the reduction in foreign content was across the board. It appears that where editors could reduce foreign content and substitute domestic content without harm to the purse, they did so.

Conclusions

These findings reveal that American newspapers were growing more domestic in their news interests in the years leading to the War of 1812. They also suggest that it was not simply a case of reduced availability of foreign material. While the Jefferson embargo may have had some affect in reducing the flow of news from abroad, it does not appear to have been a major factor in the shift away from foreign news. Had it been a

factor, a continuing drop in such content would have been expected in the early years of the period. However, the decrease did not become apparent until 1810, two years after the embargo was implemented.

The shift could not be a function of an increase in the amount of news and advertising content printed, because overall levels remained relatively stable from 1808 to 1812 (Table 8). The

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Table 8 About Here

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stability of advertising argues against there having been great economic upheavals influencing the kinds or amounts of news printed. In short, there may have been no extraneous forces at work on the newspapers which required them to reduce the level of foreign content while increasing that of domestic content.

There is evidence that the reduction in foreign news content, while not necessarily a conscious activity, may have resulted from attempts by the editors to print content that was more American in nature, or at least importance. When printing Indian news the newspapers were producing a uniquely American content. It was not simply a matter of continuing to print American news; it suggests an increased awareness of an American story. Since overall news content remained constant, if newspapers wanted to print an American story such as Indian news, something had to give. The changes in federal government news suggests an increased awareness of American news. Editors throughout the period made judgments about which was more important, a foreign or American story. Whether they elected to

print, say, Indian news, because there were more "incidents" on the frontier, is probably irrelevant. Out of the universe of material available, the editors apparently made decisions in favor of increased American content.

It cannot be determined from this study whether the newspapers led public opinion or followed it (or, indeed, if public opinion was involved at all). Certainly, the potential to lead public opinion existed, for the newspapers offered the only means for disseminating information widely. Letter-writers could pass on information but not as rapidly or as widely as the newspaper. Beyond personal contact, letter-writing was also probably the best means for passing on to the editor what was on the reader's mind. Admittedly, the editor of the early nineteenth century did not have the research techniques available to the modern editor, but he could read letters to the editor as well as his modern counterpart. And like the modern editor, the editor of the period studied probably found that his letters were no more reflective of public opinion than those written today. However, the editors of the early nineteenth century read the mail, talked with neighbors, read what other editors were writing and decided that Americans were more interested in or better served with American news content than by news from abroad.

Americans in the early nineteenth century seemed to be growing less enarmored of the Old World, with its political and social intrigues and more interested in getting their own house in order. This growing isolationism from the affairs of those outside the Western Hemisphere became a policy of government that lasted for over a century. Throughout the history of the

United States there have been isolationists who have argued that Americans should not get involved in European affairs and politics in other parts of the world. The view of the United States as world policeman is of recent vintage and there is no evidence during the period covered by this research that newspaper or government leaders had any desire regarding the rest of the world, except to be left alone. The Monroe Doctrine was itself a statement to the Old World that the Western Hemisphere should be left out of its intrigues.

The American newspaper of the early nineteenth century presented a model for consensus among the diverse population. While different viewpoints could be discussed, most could agree that the new nation should be an American original and not merely a shadow of England and Europe. The best means to that end may have been the newspaper. By offering consistency and stability, the newspaper may have helped forge the style of the nation. By giving greater attention to American content, the newspaper pointed the way, not necessarily to a New Jerusalem, but certainly away from the old. Only by looking away from the old ways could the new develop. The newspapers appear to have carried the light.

NOTES

[1]Max Lerner, America as a Civilization (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1957), pp. 23-28.

[2]Benjamin T. Spencer, The Quest for Nationality (Syracuse, N.Y.: Syracuse University Press, 1957), p. 25.

[3]Russel Blaine Nye, The Cultural Life of the New Nation (New York: Harper & Row, 1960), p. 146.

[4]Ibid.

[5]Ibid., p. 147.

[6]Robert Spiller, Willard Thort, Thomas H. Johnson, and Henry S. Canby, Literary History of the United States, rev. ed. (New York: Macmillan, 1953), pp. 115-145.

[7]Edwin Emery and Michael Emery, The Press and America, 4th ed. (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 1978), p. 107.

[8]Spiller et al., op. cit., p. 175.

[9]Ibid.

[10]Nye, op. cit., pp. 235-267.

[11]Spiller et al., op. cit., p. 121.

[12]Merle Curti, The Growth of American Thought, 3rd ed. (New York: Harper & Row, 1964), p. 73.

[13]Donald R. Avery, "Changing News Emphasis in the Pre-War Period of 1812: A Content Analysis," (M.A. Thesis, Southern Illinois University, 1981).

[14]Nye, op. cit., p. 146.

[15]Willard Grosvenor Bleyer, Main Currents in the History of American Journalism (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1927), p. 101.

[16]Frank Luther Mott, American Journalism, rev. ed. (New York: Macmillan, 1962), pp. 195-196.

[17]Ibid.

[18]Ibid. See also Allen Nevins, The Evening Post, rev. ed. (New York: Russell & Russell, 1968), pp. 81-91; Bernard A. Weisberger, The American Newspaperman (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1961), pp. 64-87.

[19]Avery, op. cit.

[20]Most historical studies discuss the newspaper as part of the nation's history. Many journalism histories give the impression that journalism occurred outside the rest of American history.

[21]Avery, op. cit.

[22]It was designed to keep American goods at home and in the process coerce the English and the French into permitting free-access to European ports by American ships.

[23]Alfred McClung Lee, The Daily Newspaper in America (New York: Macmillan, 1937), pp. 711-739.

[24]Sampling fraction:

$$sf = \frac{\text{sample size}}{\text{population size}}$$

$$sf = \frac{37}{371}$$

$$sf = .10$$

[25]All newspapers which published less than one year were deleted when encountered during the selection process and the next newspaper on the list then selected.

[26]Number of issues annually for each type of newspaper:

Weekly	52
Semi-Weekly	104
Tri-Weekly	156
Daily	260

[27]John T. Roscoe, Fundamental Research Statistics for the Behavioral Sciences, 2nd ed. (New York: Holt, Rinehart & Winston, 1975), pp. 410-411.

[28]Definitions: Foreign News. A news item generated by a foreign source (newspaper, letter proclamation, decree) or dealing with an exclusively foreign event or person; Domestic News - a news item generated by a domestic source (newspaper, letter, commentary, Act of Congress) or dealing with an exclusively American event or person; Other News - a news item which could not be placed in any other content category. Examples of such items would be newspaper statements of purpose, announcements of change of ownership or title, poetry, sports items, excerpts from literary works; Advertising - an item attempting to sell merchandise or a service; Non-Commercial Advertising - an item not attempting to sell merchandise or a service such as a death notice, legal notice, church notice, or wanted.

[29]The data in this study were coded by the author over a 16-month period in 1981 and 1982. To determine the reliability (accuracy and stability) of the coding procedures, two hundred randomly selected cases were recoded by the author and seventy-five randomly selected cases were recoded by another coder. There were five coding decisions per variable: 1) variable, 2) foreign-domestic, 3) source, 4) borrowed (not used in current study), and 5) item length (see Appendix B for reliabilities by variable). Intra-coder and inter-coder reliability was computed from the following general formula:

$$R = \frac{n(C_1 + C_2 + \ldots + C_n)}{C_1 + C_2 + 1\ 1\ 1 + C_n}$$

Where n is the number for coders; $(C_1 + C_2 + \ldots + C_n)$ is the number of category assignments on which the coders agree; and $C_1 + C_2 + \ldots + C_n$ is the number of category assignments made by the coders. Intra-coder reliability was 0.93 while inter-coder reliability was 0.88. Because both coefficients are high, coding judgments are believed to be reliable.

[30]Donald R. Avery, "The Newspaper on the Eve of the War of 1812: Changes in Content Patterns, 1808-1812," (Ph.D. Dissertation, Southern Illinois University, 1982), pp. 273-274.

[31]Analysis of variance tests the differences among many means. However, it indicates only that differences exist; it says nothing about which means differ. All assumptions of analysis of variance were met. See Roscoe, op. cit., pp. 292, 300-301.

[32]The Scheffe procedure was chosen to make the multiple comparisons. While not the most powerful of the multiple comparison procedures, the Scheffe test is suitable for use under almost any circumstances and has the added property of being relatively insensitive to departures from normality and homogeneity of variance. See Roscoe, op. cit., pp. 313-315.

[33]Donald R. Avery, "The Evolution of the American Newspaper in the Pre-War of 1812 Period: A Shift from Foreign to Domestic News Content," paper presented to the Southwest Symposium for Mass Communication, Fort Worth, Oct., 1981.

[34]The upper South is defined as Delaware, Maryland, Virginia, and Washington, D.C. The deep South is defined as the Carolinas and Georgia.

[35]Avery, "The Shift from Foreign to Domestic News," op. cit.

[36]Avery, "Changing News Emphasis in the Pre-War Period of 1812," op. cit., pp. 101-102.

[37]Ibid., p. 104.

[38]Emery, op. cit., pp. 100-101. See also Normal K. Risjord, "National Honor as the Unifying Force," in The Causes of the War of 1812, ed. Bradford Perkins (New York: Holt, Rinehart & Winston, 1962), pp. 86-95; Samuel Eliot Morison, Henry Steele Commager, and William E. Leuchenburg, The Growth of the American Republic, rev. ed. (London: Oxford University Press, 1969), p. 361; and Ray Allen Billington, Westward Expansion (New York: Macmillan, 1967), pp. 268-269.

[39]Avery, "Changing News Emphasis in the Pre-War Period of 1812," op. cit., p. 106.

[40]Avery, "The Shift from Foreign to Domestic News," op. cit.

[41]Avery, "Changing News Emphasis in the Pre-War Period of 1812," op. cit., p. 107.

[42]Mott, op. cit., pp. 195-196. See also Nevins, op. cit., pp. 81-91; and Weisberger, op. cit., pp. 64-87.

[43]The Statistical History of the United States from Colonial Times to the Present (Stamford, Conn.: Fairfield Publishers, 1965), p. 663.

[44]Avery, "The Newspaper on the Eve of the War of 1812," op. cit., pp. 170-172.

Table 1

COMPARISON OF MEANS FOR COMBINED DOMESTIC CONTENT CATEGORIES 1808-1812[a]

Year	1808	1809	1810	1811	1812
1808 ($\bar{X}$=4757)					
1809 ($\bar{X}$=4831)					
1810 ($\bar{X}$=6373)	*	*			
1811 ($\bar{X}$=7037)	*	*			
1812 ($\bar{X}$=8596)	*	*	*	*	

[a]Mean words per edition.

*Asterisk indicates means that are significantly different at the .05 level.

Table 2

COMPARISON OF MEANS FOR COMBINED FOREIGN CONTENT CATEGORIES 1808-1812[a]

Year	1808	1809	1810	1811	1812
1808 ($\bar{X}$=4842)					
1809 ($\bar{X}$=5299)					
1810 ($\bar{X}$=2970)	*	*			
1811 ($\bar{X}$=1996)	*	*	*		
1812 ($\bar{X}$=1341)	*	*	*	*	

[a]Mean words per edition.

*Asterisk indicates means that are significantly different at the .05 level.

Table 3

COMPARISON OF MEANS FOR FOREIGN RELATIONS NEWS
1808-1812[a]

Year	1808	1809	1810	1811	1812
1808 ($\bar{X}$=4604)					
1809 ($\bar{X}$=5024)					
1810 ($\bar{X}$=3568)	*	*			
1811 ($\bar{X}$=3075)	*	*	*		
1812 ($\bar{X}$=2191)	*	*	*	*	

[a]Mean words per edition.

*Asterisk indicates means that are significantly different at the .05 level.

Table 4

COMPARISON OF MEANS FOR INDIAN NEWS CONTENT BY YEAR 1808-1812[a]

Year	1808	1809	1810	1811	1812
1808 ($\bar{X}$=127)					
1809 ($\bar{X}$=173)					
1810 ($\bar{X}$=324)					
1811 ($\bar{X}$=507)	*	*			
1812 ($\bar{X}$=917)	*	*	*	*	

[a]Mean words per edition.

*Asterisk indicates means that are significantly different at the .05 level.

Table 5

COMPARISON OF MEANS FOR FEDERAL GOVERNMENT NEWS 1808-1812[a]

Year	1808	1809	1810	1811	1812
1808 ($\bar{X}$=1487)					
1809 ($\bar{X}$=872)	*				
1810 ($\bar{X}$=1401)		*			
1811 ($\bar{X}$=1305)		*			
1812 ($\bar{X}$=2218)	*	*	*	*	

[a]Mean words per edition.

*Asterisk indicates means that are significantly different at the .05 level.

Table 6

COMPARISON OF NUMBER AND PERCENTAGE OF WORDS FOR ALL FOREIGN DOMESTIC CONTENT, 1808-1812

Category	1808	1809	1810	1811	1812	Total
1. Domestic words	3,695,683.5	3,512,249.5	4,158,457.0	4,016,958.5	4,610,380.5	19,993,728.0
%	71.9	69.8	82.8	86.2	93.2	80.6
2. Foreign words	1,444,845.5	1,519,690.0	864,075.5	643,701.0	334,099.0	4,806,411.0
%	28.1	30.2	17.2	13.8	6.8	19.4
Total words	5,140,529.0	5,031,939.5	5,022,532.5	4,660,659.5	4,944,479.5	24,800,139.0
%	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

Table 7

COMPARISON OF NUMBER AND PERCENTAGE OF WORDS FOR ALL FOREIGN AND DOMESTIC FOREIGN RELATIONS CATEGORIES FOR YEARS, 1808-1812

Category	1808	1809	1810	1811	1812	Total
1. Foreign words	1,200,952.0	1,274,857.0	724,776.0	457,372.5	284,992.5	3,942,950.0
%	93.8	91.6	72.0	53.7	46.8	76.7
2. Domestic words	78,882.5	116,914.0	282,284.5	394,416.5	324,134.5	1,196,632.0
%	6.2	8.4	28.0	46.3	53.2	23.3
Total words	1,279,834.5	1,391,771.0	1,007,060.5	851,789.0	609,127.0	5,139,582.0
%	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

Table 8

COMPARISON OF NUMBER AND PERCENTAGE OF WORDS AND COLUMN INCHES OF NEWS AND ADVERTISING CONTENT FOR NEWSPAPERS, 1808-1812

Year	News	Advertising	Total
1808			
words	2,668,442.0	2,472,106.5	5,140,528.5
%	52.1	47.9	100.0
inches	58,498.0	55,578.0	114,076.0
%	51.3	48.7	100.0
1809			
words	2,806,278.0	2,225,662.5	5,031,940.5
%	55.2	44.8	100.0
inches	60,361.0	49,390.5	109,751.5
%	55.0	45.0	100.0
1810			
words	2,597,363.5	2,410,044.5	5,007,408.0
%	52.7	47.3	100.0
inches	56,968.5	53,776.0	110,744.5
%	51.4	48.6	100.0
1811			
words	2,502,119.0	2,158,539.5	4,660,658.5
%	54.0	46.0	100.0
inches	57,765.0	51,077.0	108,842.0
%	52.9	47.1	100.0
1812			
words	2,711,061.5	2,233,418.5	4,944,480.0
%	54.8	45.2	100.0
inches	58,496.0	51,696.0	110,192.0
%	53.1	46.9	100.0
Total			
words	13,285,243.0	11,499,771.0	24,785,015.5
%	53.8	46.2	100.0
inches	292,088.5	261,517.5	553,606.0
%	52.8	47.2	100.0

APPENDIX A

NUMBER OF EDITIONS PER NEWSPAPER[a]

	Newspaper	Frequency	Number
01	Connecticut Journal	Wkly	30
02	Pittsfield Sun	Wkly	30
03	Eastern Argus	Wkly	30
04	Portsmouth Oracle	Wkly	30
05	Providence Gazette	Wkly	30
06	Essex Register	Semi-Wkly	50
07	National Aegis	Wkly	30
08	Independent Chronicle	Semi-Wkly	50
09	Independent American	Wkly	26
10	Carlisle Gazette	Wkly	30
11	Otsego Herald	Wkly	30
12	New-York Herald	Semi-Wkly	50
13	Centinal of Freedom	Wkly	30
14	Tickler	Wkly	30
15	Balance	Wkly	24
16	Chenango Weekly	Wkly	13
17	Shamrock	Wkly	12
18	N.Y. Public Advertiser	Daily	130
19	Impartial Observer	Wkly	26
20	Poulson's American	Daily	130
21	N.Y. Morning Post	Daily	45
22	Commercial Advertiser	Daily	130
23	N.Y. American Citizen	Daily	78
24	Farmer's Repository	Wkly	29
25	Richmond Enquirer	Wkly	30
26	Hagerstown Gazette	Wkly	22
27	American Watchman	Semi-Wkly	35
28	National Intelligencer	Tri-Wkly	80
29	Alexandria Advertiser	Daily	117
30	Leesberg Washingtonian	Wkly	12
31	Raleigh Register	Wkly	30
32	Missouri Gazette	Wkly	27
33	Vincennes Western Sun	Wkly	30
34	Chillicothe Supporter	Wkly	26
35	Kentucky Gazette	Wkly	12
36	Knoxville Gazette	Wkly	30
37	Louisiana Gazette	Wkly	51
		TOTAL EDITIONS	1595

[a]In order to achieve equal sample size for each year, editions were randomly discarded until each year contained 278 editions. Total sample size was 1390.

APPENDIX B

INTRA- AND INTER-CODER RELIABILITIES AND COEFFICIENTS FOR VARIABLES[a]

Variables	Total Decisions Intra	Total Decisions Inter	Incorrect Decisions Intra	Incorrect Decisions Inter	Coefficients Intra	Coefficients Inter
Milfor	608	212	79	36	.870	.830
Mildom	1308	504	94	56	.928	.889
Forelfor	5176	1964	617	354	.881	.819
Foreldom	2004	756	212	91	.894	.879
Fedgofor	44	0	0	0	1.000	0
Fedgodom	3784	1440	337	163	.911	.886
Logovfor	4	0	0	0	1.000	0
Logovdom	3608	1376	53	78	.985	.943
Econfor	784	300	46	18	.941	.940
Econdom	1576	596	77	63	.951	.894
Frontfor	4	0	0	0	1.000	0
Frontdom	1696	652	32	43	.982	.934
Otherfor	1004	384	56	33	.944	.914
Otherdom	6044	2348	323	325	.946	.862
Adsellfo	30	12	2	1	.933	.916
Adselldo	193	72	17	9	.911	.875
Adnotefo	9	10	1	2	.889	.800
Adnotedo	189	69	19	11	.889	.841
TOTAL	28065	10695	1965	1283	.930	.880

[a]The term "intra" refers to intra-coder judgments and the term "inter" refers to inter-coder judgments.

THE AMERICAN NEWSPAPER IN THE EARLY NINETEENTH CENTURY:
THE TORCH-BEARER?

Abstract

A major emphasis in American newspapers, prior to the War of 1812, was the coverage of foreign news. Such concern with England and Europe ended, historians say, with the War of 1812. Journalism historians see the war as the seminal event in the shift of American newspapers from foreign to domestic news content. However, little research has been directed at studying these traditional views.

This study sought to determine if the shift from foreign to domestic news content was abrupt, as has been suggested, or was an on-going process for some years prior to the War of 1812.

Content analysis was performed on a 10 percent sample of all American newspapers existing in 1810. A total of 1,395 editions were studied for the priod 1808-1812. The data were subjected to analysis of variance and the Scheffe procedure.

It was found that foreign news declined significantly over the five-year period while domestic news increased significantly. The major newspaper content, with nearly half the total space, was advertising. The major news category was foreign relations news. Except for local government news, significant changes over time were found in all newspaper content. Domestic news increased and foreign news decreased in a virtual one-to-one ratio.

The findings suggest that American newspapers were becoming more domestic in their news concerns in the years just before the War of 1812 and the shift from a major concern with foreign news to an interest in more domestic content appears to have been virtually a fait accompli by the end of 1810.

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This study sought to determine if the shift from foreign to domestic news content among American newspapers occurred with the War of 1812, as has been suggested by journalism historians, or was an on-going process for some years prior to the war.

The findings suggest that American newspapers were becoming more domestic in their news concerns in the years just prior to the War of 1812 and the shift from a major concern with foreign news to an interest in more domestic content appears to have been virtually a fait accompli by the end of 1810.